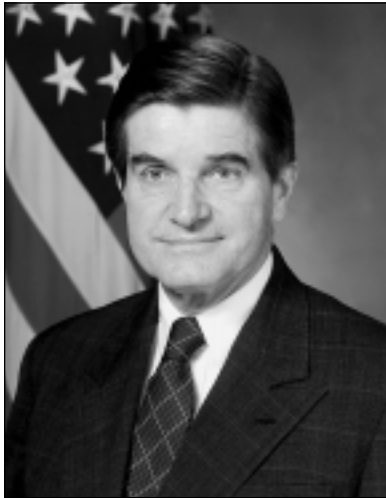


# FOREWORD



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Having emerged from the Cold War as a uniquely postured superpower, America's armed forces stand at the threshold of a new millennium. As we venture into an uncertain future, threats to U.S. interests are developing new dimensions. We are being increasingly challenged by regional instability, transnational dangers, asymmetric threats aimed at avoiding our conventional military advantages, and the likelihood of unpredictable events — threats not easily addressed by simple force-on-force calculations.

To meet these challenges, we must leverage the best capabilities and potential of our armed forces. This will be a difficult undertaking, for we will have to make hard tradeoffs that will bring the best balance, most capability, and greatest interoperability for the least cost. America's special operations forces (SOF) have an important and growing role in addressing many of these challenges.

As with all of America's armed forces, SOF face an operational environment characterized by accelerating geopolitical change, rapid technological advancement, evolving threats, constrained resources, and potential new roles. These factors require innovative thinking and new ways to shape change to provide the widest array of options in protecting America's interests. And the truth is, business as usual will not provide the capabilities needed to deal with the transnational and asymmetric threats of tomorrow. During this time of evolution, only the core values of SOF are permanent and non-negotiable. Everything else — organization, force structure, platforms, equipment, and missions — must and will continuously evolve to meet the needs of the nation and seize the opportunities brought about by change.

We cannot know with certainty who our foes will be or precisely what demands will be placed on SOF in the future. However, in a time of both uncertainty and opportunity, SOF will continue to provide our nation with the means to protect our interests and promote a peace that benefits America and the democratic ideals that we cherish.